

Amateur Radio Operator Has Distant Pals

BY DICK McDANIEL

WAUPACA—If it is possible to be a professional in an amateur field, that would be the status of Paul Niles.

Local manager of the Wisconsin Public Service Corp., Niles, has been an amateur radio operator for 31 years and is one of the less than 300 operators in the world who have made contacts with some 300 different countries.

This is quite a distinction since there are between 300,000 and 400,000 amateur radio enthusiasts scattered about the world.

Niles does not keep records of all of the radio contacts he has made, but he does have cards verifying communication with over 8,000 other amateur operators, about half of whom are in the United States, Mexico and Canada.

Two of Waupaca's pioneer amateur radio operators, Dr. A. H. Chandler and Van Boyce, interested Niles in becoming an operator and persuaded him to earn his call letters, W9KXK.

Started in 1932

Niles started working with a 20-watt unit in 1932 and established contacts in the United States, Mexico and Canada. His first contact, with a station in Kansas, was completed in International Morse code, a method he still uses in his world-wide contacts, although many of the contacts are by voice.

Niles began contacting stations in Australia, Europe and South America when he moved up to a 50 to 75-watt set.

During World War II, when amateur radio broadcasts were suspended, Niles kept active by becoming a radio instructor with the War Department, Civil Service. He served 18 months at Truax Field, Madison, and 30 months at Scott Field, Ill.

He helped instruct thousands of young Army Air



Paul Niles in His 'Ham Shack'

Force men in radio networks, control tower equipment, direction finding and other phases of radio activities. During this time, he was on a leave of absence from his Wisconsin Public Service Corp. position.

The amateur radio ban was lifted early in 1946 and Niles stayed on as an instructor until September, 1946. When he returned to Waupaca, he bought a 100-watt unit which he operated for about five years before advancing to a 175-watt unit.

Maximum Power

In the spring of 1961, he bought new equipment which brought his operation up to the 1,000-watts maximum power allowed by the Federal Communications Commission.

Niles said there is very little language barrier in the amateur field since most of the operators speak English, a required language in most European countries.

Niles was one of the organizers of the Waupaca Amateur Radio club and through the years has been working with many young boys who take an interest

in the radio field. The club now has a membership of about 22 operators.

Although there are four countries in the world with which communication is forbidden, Niles has learned a lot about geography since he started in the amateur radio field.

He knows where the sultanate of Oman, Iatar, Nepal, Marcus Island, Mongolia, Amsterdam and Holland Islands Tokelau Islands, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Island of Rhodes, Lord Howe Islands and many other unfamiliar places are located.

Niles also takes part in many radio contests. He has a DX Century club certificate for contacting 100 countries in addition to 18 stickers each awarded for 10 other contacts, the DX Century club award for all voice contact of 120 countries, a certificate for Worked All Zones, contacting operators in the 40 zones dividing the amateur radio world, and many other such awards and certificates for groups of hard-to-contact countries.

Niles' "ham shack" is located in a bedroom at his home. Mrs. Niles is interested in her husband's hobby, especially when pre-arranged contacts are made with radio friends in distance places. While the men set the dials, the women do the visiting.